



Recovery Times



Michigan
Aug. 1, 1997

"People Helping People"

FEMA
ISSUE 1



Photo by Oakland Press

Groveland Fire and Rescue Teams work to remove debris in Oakland County.

Michigan Storm Victims Receive Disaster Assistance

Disaster victims in the Detroit area are well on their way to getting federal and state disaster aid as a result of the severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that hit on July 2.

In the nearly three weeks since President Clinton's disaster declaration for Genesee, Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties, more than 5,000 people have applied for help with their disaster-related losses and damages.

In addition to help for individuals and businesses, Macomb and Wayne counties are eligible for assistance to local government entities. Saginaw County is eligible only for aid to governmental units.

The presidential disaster declaration was in response to Gov. John Engler's request for aid.

"The federal-state partnership enables us to provide victims with easy access to a wide range of disaster recovery assistance," Engler said.

The state and federal aid that results from a presidential declaration is coordinated at the federal level by the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

and can include grants to help pay for temporary housing, minor home repairs and other disaster-related expenses. Low-interest loans from the **Small Business Administration (SBA)** are also available to cover individual and business property losses that are not fully insured.

FEMA Director James Lee Witt urged those who suffered storm, tornado and flood damages, including people with insurance, to apply for assistance during the registration period.

"It's really tough when you see so many people lose the family possessions they have worked all their lives to accumulate," Witt said. "But we'll do what we can to help them rebuild and recover."

Director Witt appointed Gary Pierson to coordinate the federal relief effort.

"We want to help people recover as quickly as possible," Pierson said. "We want then to know we are concerned, and we will be there to help them apply for aid."

As of July 27, check totaling over \$1.7 million had already been distributed to disaster victims.

Important Recovery Information

Michigan residents whose homes, business or personal property sustained damage as a result of severe storms and tornadoes are urged to begin the application process. Call **1-800-462-9029** from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week. The number to call if you are speech- or hearing-impaired is **1-800-462-7585**.

"We want to be sure that everyone who is eligible for disaster assistance understands how easy it is to get help," Federal Coordinating Officer Gary Pierson said. "We encourage all who have suffered damage to call as soon as possible."

Disaster Housing Assistance

FEMA provides three kinds of grants to help home owners and renters whose primary residences are not livable. Funds may pay for alternate rental housing, essential repairs to make the home habitable or help for those facing eviction or foreclosure because of the floods.

U.S. Small Business Administration

Don't let the name confuse you. During disasters, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) provides low-interest long-term loans to home owners, renters and businesses of all sizes that are not fully insured. You can't beat the low interest rates and attractive loan terms.

National Flood Insurance

Disaster victims insured with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) are eligible to file claims to repair or replace their damaged homes and personal property. Flood insurance to protect against future flood losses can be purchased through your local insurance agent. Call **1-800-427-4661** for information.

Apply By Phone
1-800-462-9029

(TTY: 1-800-462-7585)

8 a.m. to 6 p.m. seven days a week

Toll Free

President, Governor Pledge Fast, Caring Aid



A Message From

President Bill Clinton

My heart goes out to all Michigan residents affected by the severe storms and tornadoes.

This has been an extremely rough time for thousands of Michigan residents. Many of you are repairing damaged roofs, cleaning up debris and trying to preserve your precious keepsakes and belongings. It is hard to do all this and still hold back the tears. Recovering from a storm is a slow and painful process.

A primary responsibility of the federal government is to be there when disaster strikes and to stick by people until they can get back on their feet. For that reason, I directed that residents of Michigan be eligible to apply for federal disaster assistance by using the toll-free application number listed in this publication.

I assure you that in the weeks and months to come, your government will continue to support your efforts to rebuild your lives and communities. We will be with you, along with our state and local government partners, for as long as it takes to help you on the road to recovery.

Our hearts and prayers are with you, and I wish all of the people of Michigan impacted by repeated storms Godspeed in your recovery.



A Message From

Governor John Engler

On July 2, 1997, southeast Michigan experienced one of the most devastating storms in years. As many as 13 confirmed tornado touchdowns caused extensive damage, deaths and injuries.

On that same day, our state emergency operations center was activated. The full and complete resources of state government were brought to bear to assist local communities cope with the disaster.

On July 9, I asked President Clinton to declare five counties federal disaster areas. Two days later, we were notified the President had approved disaster aid. As a result of this action, many federal disaster aid programs are now available to assist individuals, families, business owners and local governments recover from uninsured storm-related losses.

I can assure you that the state of Michigan is doing everything possible to assist you in your recovery from this devastating storm. Everyone should be proud of the spirit in which people from the affected areas have joined together to help each other. We encourage everyone to work closely with the disaster recovery teams from federal, state and local governments to expedite the recovery process.

Finally, we would like to express our heartfelt condolences to those who lost loved ones and homes.

Disaster Questions and Answers

Q. What is the first step I should take to register for disaster assistance?

A. Call the toll-free registration number **1-800-462-9029** (TTY **1-800-462-7585** for the speech- or hearing impaired).

Q. If I have insurance can I still get assistance?

A. Many federal, state, local and volunteer agency programs may help you, but none of these will provide help for expenses covered by insurance. If you have any insurance coverage, contact your insurance company. However, if you believe you have needs not met by your insurance, don't delay in applying for government disaster assistance.

Q. What information do I need to give when I call for assistance?

A. Your name, address of damaged property, insurance information, phone number where you may be reached and description of your losses.

Q. What happens after I apply?

A. A FEMA inspector will call for an appointment within two weeks after you have registered. If you have not

heard from FEMA by then, call the **FEMA Helpline, 1-800-525-0321 (TTY 1-800-660-8005)**. When the inspector arrives, be sure to ask for his or her official FEMA identification.

Q. I registered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and then I received a disaster loan application from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Why did I receive a loan application?

A. SBA is the primary source of federal funds for long-term recovery assistance for disaster victims. For disaster damage to private property owned by individuals, families and businesses that are not fully covered by insurance, the basic form of federal assistance is a low-interest disaster loan from SBA.

Q. What happens if I cannot afford a loan?

A. Even if you believe you can't afford a loan, you should submit your low-interest loan application to SBA. If SBA determines you are unable to repay a loan, SBA automatically refers you to the state-run grant program. This grant program may provide assistance, insurance or help from other sources.

Loans, Grants and More

Helping Michigan Residents on the Road to Recovery

Individuals and business owners who suffered losses because of the July 2 tornadoes and severe storms and are located in the declared counties may be eligible for assistance. Designated counties include: Genesee, Macomb, Oakland and Wayne.

DISASTER HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Help is available for renters and home owners whose primary residences were damaged or destroyed or who face displacement from their homes. Aid can include grants for alternate rental housing, money for emergency repairs to make a home livable, or mortgage or rental assistance.

HOME/PERSONAL PROPERTY DISASTER LOANS

U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans of up to \$200,000 are available to home owners for real estate repairs. Renters and home owners may borrow up to \$40,000 to replace personal property losses.

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY GRANT PROGRAM

Grants may be made to meet disaster-related serious needs or necessary expenses not covered by other assistance programs or insurance.

BUSINESS DISASTER LOANS

Businesses of all sizes and nonprofit organizations may borrow up to \$1.5 million from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to fund repairs or replacement of real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets. For small businesses only, SBA makes economic injury loans available for working capital to pay necessary obligations.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or economic status. If you are someone you know has been discriminated against, call the **FEMA Helpline 1-800-525-0321 (TTY: 1-800-660-8005)**.

CONSUMER SERVICES

Assistance may be provided in filing consumer complaints about disreputable business practices and other problems.

DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

Weekly benefits may be provided for those out of work due to the disaster, including self-employed persons, farm/ranch owners and others not covered by regular unemployment. Apply at local unemployment offices.

AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE

Emergency loans may be available to farmers operating and managing farms or ranches, limited to compensation for actual losses to essential property and/or production capacity. Cost sharing grants also are available for emergency conservation measures. Contact your local U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Center.

SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Help is provided to speed the delivery of checks delayed by the disaster and to apply for Social Security disability and survivor benefits.

TAX ASSISTANCE

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows federal income tax deductions for underinsured or uninsured casualty losses on homes, personal property and household goods. Those eligible may file amended returns for the previous year to receive early tax refunds.

FRAUD PROTECTION AND LEGAL SERVICES

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development can assist in cases of unlawful discrimination in covered housing. Complaints of fraud or other misrepresentation may be filed with the Michigan Attorney General's Office. Legal assistance and referrals may be available by calling the Michigan Bar Association.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

Assistance is available from the Michigan Insurance Commission of the

Department of Consumer and Industry Services on matters such as expediting settlements, obtaining copies of lost policies, verifying losses and filing claims.

VETERANS BENEFITS

Information is available about benefits, pensions, insurance and VA mortgage loans.

VOLUNTEER AGENCY SERVICES

Volunteer relief agencies, such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and religious groups, offer a wide range of services from supplying victims with home clean-up kits to financial assistance to meet emergency disaster-caused needs.

To help you, FEMA will . . .

- Provide you with access to disaster assistance.
- Provide you with an opportunity to tell your story to a responsive FEMA representative.
- Treat you with respect and caring.
- Give you clear, accurate information about available assistance and how to apply for it.
- Explain clearly what you need to do after registration, what you can expect from government agencies and how long the process should take.
- If you are eligible, provide you with disaster housing assistance as promptly as possible and give you an estimate of when you will receive assistance.
- Advise you on how to protect against future losses.
- Use your suggestions to improve our service.

Out of Work Because of the Disaster?

Your business has been destroyed. Your crops have been damaged. You no longer have a job or income. What do you do?

The federal disaster unemployment assistance program may provide you with a weekly check if you have become unemployed or have suffered a loss of income due to the disaster.

What is the first thing I need to do?

Call the state/federal toll-free application number **1-800-462-9029 (TTY 1-800-462-7585)** for the speech- and hearing-impaired).

Who will process my application?

Your local unemployment office processes your application, determines your eligibility and disburses checks.

How often are payments made?

Disaster unemployment assistance can provide weekly benefits for up to 26 weeks following the date of the declaration of the disaster.

How do I know if I am eligible for benefits?

You may be if you are:

- out of work as a result of the disaster;
- self employed or a migrant/seasonal worker with income substantially affected due to the disaster;
- an employee not covered by any other unemployment compensation;
- a survivor who, as a result of the disaster, becomes head of household.

Is disaster unemployment assistance the only way to get help?

You may be eligible for other disaster assistance programs. To find out, call **1-800-462-9029 (TTY 1-800-462-7585)** for the speech- and hearing-impaired).



(Front row, left to right) Michigan Gov. John Engler, Hamtramck Mayor Robert Kozaren and Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer survey damage on the morning after the storm.

SBA low-interest loans to help you recover . . .

Not Just for Small Businesses

Low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) are the primary form of federal assistance for long-term recovery for home owners and renters, as well as businesses of all sizes. These SBA loans fund repairs of damages to private property that is not fully covered by insurance. By making affordable loans, the SBA disaster program helps disaster victims pay for repairs while keeping costs to the taxpayer reasonable.

SBA disaster loans of up to \$200,000 are available to home owners for real estate repairs, and up to \$40,000 for replacement of disaster-damaged personal property. Renters may borrow up to \$40,000 to replace disaster-damaged personal property.

SBA analyzes the income and debts of a home owner or renter and if SBA determines the disaster victim cannot afford an SBA disaster loan, SBA may automatically refer the applicant to the Individual and Family Grant Program.

Businesses of all sizes and private nonprofit organizations may apply for low-interest disaster loans from the SBA to repair or replace disaster-damaged real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets. Loans up

to \$1.5 million are available for losses not fully covered by insurance.

For small businesses only, SBA makes Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDLs) to provide working capital to pay necessary obligations until operations return to normal after the disaster. These working capital loans are available to businesses financially impacted by the disaster, even if they had no property damage. Small businesses located in counties contiguous to the declared counties also may apply for these economic injury loans.

If you need assistance in completing your loan application, you can get help from an SBA representative at all disaster recovery centers.

Disaster assistance benefits will not affect your eligibility for Social Security, welfare, food stamps or other federal benefits.



Workers board-up room of advanced technology building of Focus Hope in Detroit.

Photo by Detroit Free Press/Mary Schroeder

Rebuilding or Repairing? Proceed with Caution

Common sense is the watchword when hiring a contractor to repair or rebuild your storm-damaged home.

“If you were satisfied with past work done by local licensed contractors, try them first. If they cannot help you, ask for recommendations,” State Coordinating Officer Captain Robert Tarrant said. “If you must hire a contractor you don’t know, talk to several before signing anything.”

To help the process go as smoothly as possible, follow these suggestions:

Check the contractor’s reputation. The local Better Business Bureau, home builders association or building trades council are sources of information. Ask if the contractor you are thinking of using has unanswered complaints filed against him.

Ask for references. Contractors should be willing to provide names of previous customers. Call some of the customers and ask if they would hire the contractor again.

Ask for proof of insurance. Be sure the contractor has disability and workers’ compensation insurance. If not, you may be liable for accidents on your property.

Ask for a written estimate. Make sure it includes everything you expect the contractor to do. Some contractors charge a fee for an estimate.

Ask for a contract. The contract should clearly state all work, costs and the payment schedule. Never sign a blank contract or one with blank spaces. It may be worthwhile to have a lawyer look at the contract before signing it.

Ask for guarantees in writing. If the contractor provides guarantees, he should clearly state what is guaranteed, who is responsible for the guarantee (dealer, contractor or manufacturer) and how long the guarantee is valid.

Get a copy of the final, signed contract. Once signed, the contract is binding upon both you and the contractor.

Do not sign off before the job is finished. Do not sign completion papers or make the final payment until the work is completed to your satisfaction. A reputable contractor will not threaten you or pressure you to sign if the job is not finished properly.

Use Care When Hiring Contractors

If you were affected by the recent tornadoes, you should be aware that some unscrupulous contractors may try to take advantage of you.

“If you have disaster-related damages, I urge you to be very careful when contracting for repairs,” Federal Coordinating Officer Gary Pierson of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) said.

“Be especially alert for door-to-door solicitors who ask for large cash deposits or entire payments in advance,” State Coordinating Officer Captain Robert Tarrant said. “Often the work is never performed or the down payment is never returned.”

Tarrant suggests that disaster victims call the Michigan Attorney General’s Office if they have concerns about people representing themselves as contractors.

“You should remember that federal workers and federal contract workers do not charge victims for their services,” Pierson said. “If someone posing as a federal employee or federal contractor attempts to collect money for their help, report the person and their vehicle license number to your local police department.”

Recovery Times is published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Michigan State Police Emergency Management Division with help from other federal, state and voluntary agencies. It provides timely and accurate information about disaster recovery programs. Comments and inquiries about *Recovery Times* may be directed to **1-800-525-0321**. For additional copies of *Recovery Times*, call **1-800-480-2520**.

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Photo by The Citizen, Hamtramck Publishing

Clean up begins in Hamtramck the day after the tornado hit.

Personal Inspections of Your Home Ensure the Right Kind of Help for You

Damage inspectors will schedule appointments to visit people who have applied for disaster assistance. If your home has been damaged, one or more inspectors may visit.

A **FEMA** inspector schedules an appointment to verify losses after you apply for disaster assistance through the toll free registration line: **1-800-462-9029** (**1-800-462-7585** for speech and hearing impaired).

If you apply for a **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)** low-interest loan, SBA will send a loss verifier.

The **American Red Cross** sends loss verifiers if you apply for Red Cross assistance.

Local building and safety inspectors may be sent to see if damaged buildings are safe to enter.

All inspectors and verifiers carry official photo identification. If an inspector or verifier is not wearing an identification card or badge, ask to see it.

When you apply, you will be asked to prominently display your street address on the front of your house. This will help inspectors find your dwelling.

Beware of Debris as Cleanup Continues

The debris left behind by the tornadoes may be a source of injury or illness. Be careful when cleaning damaged structures or handling debris. Here are some safety tips:

- Always wear gloves and work boots;
- Separate hazardous materials from other debris;
- Always wash your hands after cleanup;
- Treat electrical lines and outlets with extreme care. **Don't assume power is off.**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) advises everyone to use extreme cau-

tion when returning to areas damaged by the recent tornadoes.

Potential chemical hazards may be encountered during the repair and recovery efforts. The storm may have moved containers of hazardous solvents or industrial chemicals from their normal storage places.

Do not try to remove any propane tanks. These represent a real danger of fire or explosion. EPA urges you to call the police or fire department to report locations of tanks.

Important Phone Numbers - *Clip and Save*

Federal Agencies

FEMA Registration	800-462-9029
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired).	800-462-7585
Disaster Information Helpline	800-525-0321
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired).	800-660-8005
FEMA Fraud Detection	800-323-8603
National Flood Insurance Program	800-427-4661
Social Security Administration	800-772-1213
U.S. Small Business Administration	800-359-2227
Internal Revenue Service.	800-829-1040
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired).	800-829-4059
Housing and Urban Development Hotline	800-669-9777

State Agencies

Office of Emergency Management	
City of Detroit	313-596-2903
Macomb County	810-469-5344
State Police	517-333-5038

Oakland County	248-858-5300
Wayne County	313-942-5289
Attorney General's Office	517-373-8060
Department of Agriculture	517-373-1104
Department of Civil Rights	517-373-1189
Department of Community Health	517-241-2112
Department of Environmental Quality	517-241-7397
Department of State Police	517-336-6202
Public Information Office	517-333-5038
Family Independent Agency	517-373-7394
Jobs Commission	517-335-4590
Office of Services to the Aging	517-373-4081
Office of the Governor	517-325-6397
Veterans Affairs	313-381-1370

Voluntary Agencies

American Red Cross	313-833-4440
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